

# 2023 VCE Texts and Traditions external assessment report

## General comments

The 2023 Texts and Traditions examination was based solely on Units 3 and 4 of the VCE Texts and Traditions study design.

Some of the best responses were remarkably clear. They answered the question in a straightforward manner, tended to be clearly structured, and did not add additional, irrelevant information. This meant that in Part 1 – Extended responses, the answers clearly moved from each part of the question to the next; in Part 2 – Exegetical response, the answers were clearly signposted so that it was very clear what the student was attempting to do; and in Part 3 – Essays, each paragraph built on a strongly structured argument.

A number of students did not label their responses, including the different parts of Question 4. Some students unnecessarily wrote out the whole question before the response, and some students wrote their name on the cover of the answer book instead of the name of the subject.

Higher-scoring responses addressed the command words. Students should be familiar with the command words which have been published by VCAA and are available on the VCAA website. In the 2023 examination, the command words and instructions used were: 'briefly discuss', 'discuss', 'briefly describe', 'provide an example', 'explain', 'explain the significance', 'explain the meaning', 'analyse', 'outline', 'refer to three examples', 'support your answer with examples', 'use examples from across the [set text] or [passages for special study]', 'using the categories of ...', 'in what ways does ...', and 'who is?'. These are typical of the command words and instructions relevant to the study of Texts and Traditions and used in the examination.

Students are reminded to respond only in English and not use foreign words unnecessarily. For a full discussion of this point see the general comments of the *2022 VCE Texts and Traditions external assessment report*. Paragraphing helps with the structure of responses, and students should aim for full sentences.

## Specific information

### Part 1 – Extended responses

In the 2023 examination paper, across the four strands of the subject, Questions 1–3 were based on either Unit 3, Area of Study 1 – The background of the tradition, or Unit 3, Area of Study 2 – Audience, purposes and literary aspects of the set texts. The spread of marks across the four strands was as follows.

## Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	2	2	5	10	11	15	13	15	8	6	5.3

## Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	8	1	3	5	17	16	15	13	10	6	6	5.3

## Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	3	4	7	9	12	18	9	13	7	8	5.4

High-scoring responses broke each of the questions down, addressed each part of the question in a separate paragraph following the command words, and included the requested number of examples within the question. However, the average marks for Questions 1–3 across the four strands was between 5.4 and 5.5, and 8–14% of attempted responses did not receive a score at all.

Responses that did not score well generally left out or ignored parts of the question, did not follow the command words, and/or were too brief. Other extended responses, for example in the Qur'an papers, were written as an essay, with lengthy introductions and conclusions as well as references to sources and scholarly opinions. Essay-style introductions and conclusions are not necessary in the parts of the 10-mark extended responses, and also restrict the time needed for the rest of the examination.

## Question 4

Question 4 is based on Unit 4, Area of Study 3 – Sacred texts and later traditions, and directly follows the key knowledge and key skills dot points, which students are advised to be familiar with. All four strands of the subject complete the exact same question.

The spread of marks over the four strands of the study were as follows.

### Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	16	43	41	1.3

### Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	32	11	22	18	18	1.8

## Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	18	26	21	14	1.9

Higher-scoring responses used the three parts of the question to structure the response and were able to link the three parts together.

However, a notable number of responses did not label the three parts of Question 4. They tended not to completely answer each part of the question, especially part b., which asked students to 'analyse the way a document or writing from a period later than the set text has explored this textual theme'. Approximately one third of responses did not name a document or writing. Some lower-scoring responses wrote generally about later interpretations within the tradition. Many students didn't seem to pay attention to the terms 'from a later period' and referred only to the set text. Some textual themes chosen did not successfully show any reinterpretation of the textual theme from the set text, but merely stated how the theme from the set text was still relevant.

Students are advised to write the textual theme they've chosen as a single word or title, as no marks are awarded for outlining or explaining the textual theme before the response is begun.

The following brief excerpts from student responses are not complete, but they demonstrate how some students successfully answered the three parts of the 2023 question.

### Sample 1

- a Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel describe messianism as a future era of restoration, that includes <example from the set text given> as well as a time where <second example given>...*
- b The Pittsburg [sic] Platform (1885) released a statement, describing the emerging reform Judaism movement's stance on messianism and its role in modern society.*
- c ...their reinterpretation allowed members to be involved in the tradition and value messianism...*

### Sample 2

- a The theme social justice is embedded into the core of the Lukan Gospel. From the infancy narrative this theme is displayed through <example from the set text given>. The preferential option for the poor is again highlighted through the <second example given> ...*
- b A document that reflected this is 'Rerum Novarum' by Pope Leo...*
- c Social Justice statements are published by...each year to teach [people] how to put into practice the words of Luke to face modern-day issues.*

### Sample 3

- a The Christology of Jesus being divine stems from <example from the set text given>*
- b Pope Leo's 449 [CE]...letters, whilst affirming Jesus' divinity...identify his humanity...*
- c Leo's 449 declaration was influential in the Council of Chalcedon...as a justification for...demonstrating Jesus as both wholly divine and human...*

## Sample 4

a *The theme of monotheism is developed through the set text. In Makkan surahs, proofs are provided for Monotheism...<example given>...*

b *In his book 'Let us be Muslim', Abul Ala Mandudi has explored this theme and stated that in the modern time, new threats to Monotheism are present...<example given>...*

c *A later interpretation of this theme led to introduction of new forms of Shirk such as <two examples given>*

## Part 2 – Exegetical response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
%	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	0.5	2	5	5	4	3

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Average
5	5	8	7	5	3	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	2	5	18.7

The average score for the exegetical response was 18.7 out of a possible 30 marks, with the vast majority (84%) of responses achieving 12 or more. Approximately 20% of responses were awarded over 25 marks, and 24% awarded 20 to 25 marks. Responses clearly demonstrated understanding of the exegetical method, knowledge of the passages for special study, and ability to successfully analyse extracts or passages offered in the examination.

Exeges that achieved high scores analysed the extracted passage as a whole, rather ayah by ayah, or verse by verse. High-scoring exeges also explained the significance of bolded words and phrases, literary forms and techniques, themes and ideas and their function, or impact, within the passage or set text as a whole, within the body of the exegesis, rather than adding them in as a final paragraph of the exegesis.

Lower-scoring exeges did not embed discussion of the bolded words and phrases across the exegesis, but were dealt with in one paragraph at the end of the exegesis. Some students named literary features or techniques, such as metaphors, rhetorical questions, end stress or statements, but did not identify, explain or comment on their significance or function within the extract or passage.

Another common mistake was that some responses focused on the whole surah or chapter, instead of focusing on the given extract or passage offered in the examination. Some attention to the literary and thematic context is necessary, but the major focus should be on the extract or passage given. Some lower-scoring exegetical responses were summaries of the extract. Some other responses, mostly those that followed an ayah-by-ayah or verse-by-verse approach, had little structure. Commenting on major and minor themes and ideas of the passage is one way to better approach exegesis.

## Part 3 – Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
%	3	0.5	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	5	4	5	5

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Average
3	4	5	4	5	2	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	5	16.7

The average score for the essay response was 16.7 out of a possible 30 marks. Approximately 13% of responses were awarded over 25 marks, and approximately 21% awarded 20 to 25 marks. Some 40.7% of responses were awarded 14 or less marks, with 3.1% of attempted essays receiving zero.

Higher-scoring responses demonstrated understanding of all parts of the question, including following the command terms within the question. These stronger responses also incorporated quotes from the set text and relevant associated texts, plus scholarly quotes and opinions. The highest-scoring responses were able to cite current scholarly opinion, including direct quotes, and to name the scholars cited.

Many of the essay questions had a prompt; however, the prompt is not the actual question. It should be remembered that most essay questions have multiple parts. Care should be taken to read the whole of the question, which functions as instructions for the essay response. Many lower-scoring responses addressed only parts of the question. An essay response cannot achieve a high score if part or parts of a question have not been addressed. The prompt may be used in the response, but the better responses cited scholarly opinion beyond the prompt.

Some lower-scoring responses did not have enough detailed discussion or references to the set text. It is advisable that students choose the question carefully before they begin writing, or even write a very brief plan so that they can work out how they will answer the question.

One of the critical criteria for assessment of the essay, in which many responses did not score well, is 'management of the topic, using various terms, concepts and parts of the topic to support a discussion and/or interpretation that is relevant to the topic', as asked for within the question. Brief essays, essays that address only a part or parts of the actual question, and essays that do not demonstrate a detailed understanding of the question do not demonstrate this criterion. The examination assessment criteria for Parts 2 and 3 are published not only in the actual examination but also on the [VCAA website](#).